

1961

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — APPENDIX

A4577

The Castro Tractor Proposal
EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF
HON. STROM THURMOND
OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES
Tuesday, June 20, 1961

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Appendix of the RECORD an editorial from the June 16, 1961, issue of the State which expresses the sentiment of 100 percent of the communications coming to my office about the Castro tractor blackmail scheme. It is entitled "Tractor Deal Shows It—We Can't Deal with Tyrants." The State is capably edited by Mr. Henry Cauthen, a sound thinker and an able writer.

There being no objection, the editorial was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

TRACTOR DEAL SHOWS IT—WE CAN'T DEAL WITH TYRANTS

Once more it has been shown that the Communist-type dictator cannot be dealt with under free world standards.

Fidel Castro calculates that if someone is willing to pay blackmail there's no point in keeping it at the penny ante level.

He also figures they deserve no respect and should be made to look as foolish as possible. He demonstrated these feelings in dealing with the Tractors for Freedom Committee.

Although the move to ransom the prisoners Castro captured in the ill-fated invasion attempt of April was evidently initiated by the administration, many legal and congressional experts maintain the Tractor Committee is acting in violation of the Logan Act.

There may have been some slight excuse for falling for the blackmail scheme as long as Castro claimed the tractors were for ransom of the prisoners. But the whole business should have been brought to a screaming halt as soon as he started claiming the Americans must give him \$28 million worth of tractors as indemnity for damages suffered during the invasion. He began referring to the tractors as indemnity only a few days after he first proposed the exchange.

Castro first used the 500-tractor figure in proposing the prisoner swap, and reportedly the whole thing started as a Fidel-type jest. Now he says he wants 900 tractors of a heavy-duty type—a type suitable for building airfields, military bases, etc., so he can better handle the Communist jet aircraft and tanks.

Since the Tractor Committee says it will not provide such equipment, he says he would be willing to accept the 500 farm tractors plus about \$25.5 million in cash, with the further provision that the transportation costs of the big tractors be added.

Despite the subterfuge of a Tractors for Freedom Committee, the world generally regards the exchange as actually being directed by the U.S. Government. The administration has publicly backed the private committee, and maintained contributions to the committee would be tax deductible.

If the Government now consents to the exchange of 500 farm tractors plus cash for the prisoners, people everywhere will regard the deal as just what Castro calls it—indemnity for the invasion.

And instead of losing respect for having callously offered to trade 1,200 men for 500 tractors, Castro will have gained tremendous stature with his people and the millions of sympathizers he has in South America. In their eyes, Castro will have made the Yankee giant look like a paper kitten.

1961 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — APPENDIX

Cuba

A4431

Tractors for Castro's Prestige

EXTENSION OF REMARKS
OF

HON. GERALD R. FORD, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 15, 1961

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, in the past we heard a great deal about the prestige of the United States abroad. An editorial in the Grand Rapids Press for June 9 points out very well, I think, one aspect of the tractors-for-prisoners deal proposed by Dictator Castro which should be noted by all of us. As the editorial of the Grand Rapids Press points out:

The Cuban dictator wants more than tractors, he wants prestige, at this country's expense.

Under leave to extend my remarks, I include this editorial entitled "Tractor's for Castro's Prestige."

TRACTOR'S FOR CASTRO'S PRESTIGE

Fidel Castro's motives in the tractors-for-prisoners deal are all too apparent. The Cuban dictator wants more than tractors—he wants prestige, at this country's expense. This has become even more evident with his request that members of the Tractors for Freedom Committee meet with him in Cuba to discuss the trade.

Castro doesn't want just any member of the committee. He has specifically asked that the principal members of the delegation include such persons as Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Dr. Milton Eisenhower. And he has been utterly frank about explaining why he should like them to be included. "They are better known in political spheres," he has said.

Castro is fishing for world attention. He wants to meet with persons who are known the world over, persons universally recognized and respected for their humanitarian activities. Their presence at his table would lend an air of respectability to the proceedings that otherwise might be lacking.

But regardless which committee members were to meet with Castro—and the latest is that none will—they would have no authority to negotiate with him on the terms he has laid down. Castro is insisting that the 500 tractors he has asked in return for about 1,120 prisoners must be regarded as indemnity for the damages caused Cuba by the abortive April invasion. This demand involves issues that can only be settled by the Government.

To accept Castro's terms would be to acknowledge the invasion as an American venture, rather than as a campaign planned and carried out by exiled Cubans. This would be contrary to the country's official position. The terms must be considered unacceptable. Their sole purpose is to demean the United States and to make it appear as if it were abjectly confessing guilt in the invasion attempt.

This has been Castro's objective from the first—and the wonder is that President Kennedy, who has given his blessing to the tractor-prisoner trade, did not immediately see through Castro's motives. That Mr. Kennedy is known to have quietly encouraged the deal in the very beginning places the country in an embarrassing position. For even if Castro finally relents and accepts the trade on terms within the power of the United States to negotiate, the results will be widely interpreted as a victory for him and a dismal retreat by the United States. The brutal truth of the matter is that we have nothing to gain in this affair, but a great